

That Terrible Tempest in Greenwich Village

How a Pirate Cruise of Artists and Models Started as a Lark and Ended as a Tragedy When Somebody Exposed the Commercial Germ in (the Soul of) "Bohemia"



Three of the Captivating Members of Captain Sam Schwartz's 'Pirate Band' Who Set Sail Under the Jolly Roger. Left to Right—Peggy Johnson, Lucille Kahn and Kathleen Sutherland.

AND now here's "emancipated" Greenwich Village acting just like a Cranford sewing circle! The soul-free Bohemians are suffering from an attack of New England conscience. Or maybe it's Iowa conscience or Georgia conscience. Anyway, it's got those unconventional Villagers saying "Tut, tut, tut!" They are shaking their heads as indignantly as a lot of small-towners over the scandal at the freemen's picnic.

What's it all about? Sh-h-h! Pirates! That's what it's about. Pirates! Village pirates; female pirates; pirates that prowled around tea shops and studios; pirates that wear rings in their ears and smoke cigarette fiercely and would just as leave scuttle a schooner of orange juice as not! It's pirates that started the tempest in the tea rooms.

They all went buccaneering on the Hudson River. They carried cutlasses and sang blood-thirsty songs—it was enough to chase cold shivers down the spines of ordinary, unemancipated mortals. And then, at the first feeble flash of gunpowder the pirates and the piratessees made for shore in a body. They dug their cutlasses away and crawled prayerfully into taxicabs.

But that isn't all. The Village has another pirate crew. Its captain said the cruising pirates were pirating his stuff. He threatened to go to law about it—just like the folks do out in the hide-bound provinces. And a lot of other Villagers got indignant, too. They said the pirates and the piratessees were getting—well, a bit too much so. And they threatened to go to—now what DO you think?—the Village Chamber of Commerce! Just like the folks back in Topeka and Allegheny City.

The whole affair has stirred America's Bohemia as nothing has since the last census showed most Villagers are married and glad of it. And it's difficult to tell which faction is the most started—the Villagers suffering from New England conscience, or the other Villagers who never dreamed such a thing as a New England conscience was sneaking around their back yards.

Really, all the fault belongs to Mlle. Anita Berber, who lives several thousand miles away from Greenwich Village in Paris. Mlle. Berber is known as "the most extravagant woman in Europe." She's an actress and her allowance for clothes is a paltry million francs per year. Her doting husband gives her that. He says he's glad his little wife is a spender. He's proud of her and her extravagance. Or so he tells the public.

Mlle. Berber's admirers gave her a ball. A Pirate Ball. It took place in the Montmartre, which Greenwich Villagers call "the Greenwich Village of Europe." Mlle. Berber wore a cunning pirate costume, and when some pictures of her were printed in America several of the Greenwich Village cuties exclaimed, "How perfectly swanky!"

Nothing must do but the Village should ape the Montmartre. America's Quarter Latin would have its own Pirate Ball. But Sam Schwartz, who promoted the last Pagan Route, had a better notion. If they

were going to be pirates, why not be the real thing? Instead of a ball, it should be a "pirates' cruise"—on the Hudson, in a steamboat, with the Jolly Roger dancing above and the jolly pirates dancing below in the moonlight.

The idea swept the village like a new cult. The date was set. The steamboat was chartered. During the next few weeks it is estimated that fifty cords of cracker boxes were converted into cutlasses and enough posters printed to plaster every inch of coffee-house wall space in the Village.

The posters started the first rumrump. A Villager by the name of Don Dickerman squawked loudly. Villager Dickerman owns the "Pirates' Den," and has owned it for the past twelve years. It's a basement haunt where the Bohemians and the Hobohemians may invite their souls in a "Treasure Island" atmosphere. Villager Dickerman, having been the only pirate in the Village for so long, felt he had a patent on piracy. He objected to sharing the patent with any other pirates—even for one night.

Besides, the posters bore this verse: "Fifteen men on the dead man's chest! Yo! ho! ho! You know the rest!" Villager Dickerman said he knew the rest. It was something about a bottle of rum. Of course, Villager Schwartz and his freebooters might not be hinting. But you never could tell how people would take things these days. And just supposing somebody thought the "Pirates' Den" was fostering this cruise? Just imagine, for one minute, how terrible it would be if anyone suspected him, Villager Dickerman, of hinting at bottles of rum?

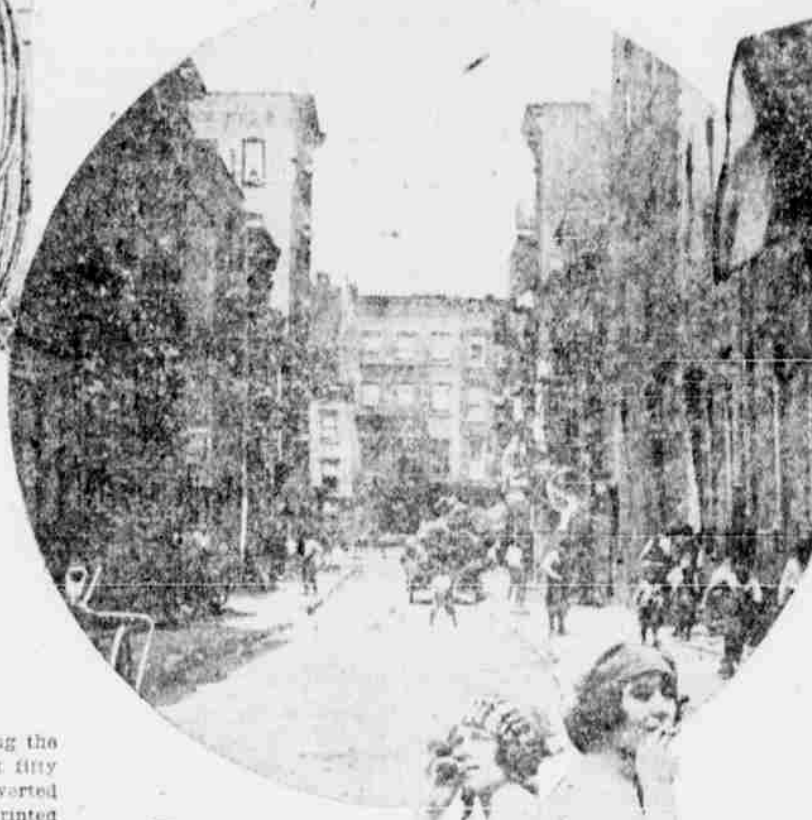
Villager Dickerman squawked so loudly that the posters were changed. An added line notified the world that the Schwartz cruise had nothing to do with the Dickerman den. But even then Villager Dickerman wasn't satisfied. He said the letters in the extra line weren't big enough. He was still saying so when the Schwartz pirates put to sea—or river.

Investigation by the low-brow police has failed to reveal exactly what happened among the piratical intellectuals on the Hudson that night. It was a very wet night, to begin with—raining you know. And that kept a lot of pirates at home, playing chess. But the smallness of the crew and the wetness of the night merely increased the jollity aboard.

Some of the pirates, the police are satisfied, remembered the rest of the dead man's chest. There was, they declare, rum aboard. There was, also—so the police say—a Villager from the Bronx whose name was Lena, and a Villager from somewhere in Ohio who hit on the cute idea of impersonating a revenue officer.

The Ohio Villager stuck a tin star on his pirate's shirt and announced he was Izzy Einstein, demon prohibition sleuth, in disguise. Then he began to yobu his way from group to group, collecting bottles as he went. The paralyzed pirates yielded their treasure docilely—until the fake Mr. Einstein arrived at the table of Lena, the Bronx Villager.

Lena, according to the police, recognized



The Normally Peaceful Greenwich Village Now Torn by a Piratical Twister.

the Ohio villager as a traveling man from Dayton. She drew her cutlass and defied him. Lena's fellow also drew his cutlass and whacked the traveling man on the ear with it. Whereupon the whole crew of pirates and piratessees began to mill about the docks in an awful hurly-burly.

"Bang!" Yes, just one bang. But that was enough. The pirate ship put for shore. It was then in the Hudson, opposite One Hundred and Thirtieth street, and at the foot of this street the gangplank was lowered. The first man down it, helped by two friends, was a pirate who had been shot in the foot. He was hustled away to a hospital secretly.

And following him down the gangplank came the whole crew of pirates and piratessees, who had one smell of gunpowder and were ready to cry, "Ouch! Let's quit!"

In the dim light of early morning, with their brave red kerchiefs bedraggled, their cutlasses left behind and their blood-thirsty songs sunk to lousy whimpers, the Village pirates scurried away by taxicabs and subway—back to the studios and chess.

The police made an investigation. But—what with the hasty confusion to the cruise, the wetness of the night and all—they could learn little. Anyway, they agreed that one casualty—and that in the foot—was moderate enough for such a swash-buckling event.

That would have been the last said or done about the famous pirates' cruise if it hadn't been for those New England consciences in the Village. Perhaps the shot woke them up. At any rate, they rose, along with all the other consciences from Iowa and Georgia. Along, too, with the Dickerman conscience, which was by no means satisfied because the cruise was history.

The latest news from the harbor of Bohemians may surprise the rest of the



Mlle. Anita Berber, the Montmartre Pirate Who Furnished the Greenwich Village Buccaneers with an Idea.

Georgette O'Brien (Left), and Renee Darmort of the "Jolly Roger" Party.

world. The more conservative Villagers—and it appears there actually are conservative Villagers—have started a movement to combat pirate cutlasses and parson routes and masquerade balls and all such unconventional affairs where they are in any way identified with the Village. This is what they say:

"Greenwich Village isn't all Bohemian. It has good citizens who strongly disapprove of its reputation for unconventionality. They pay taxes, vote for candidates, raise children and work hard like the rest of the world. It will be their aim, through the Greenwich Village Chamber of Commerce and like organizations, to make Greenwich Village a good place to live—not a good place to frolic."

Taxpayers! Candidates! Children! Chamber of Commerce! No wonder the pirates, the cutties and the emancipated are bewildered. They aren't quite sure whether they've landed in Bohemia or Gopher Prairie.

Florence Lennoh (Above).

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